

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Fictional extracts from a member's journal.

Morning

7.15 am I arrive at Parliament House and make a brief statement to television journalists at the entrance to Parliament House.

7.30 am Off to the gym, watch TV news as I work out.

8.15 am Have breakfast with friends from the same party to review the main political stories in the newspapers. Then I have a brief meeting with my three office staff and plan the day.

8.55 am I walk down the corridor to the House of Representatives and attend the opening of the Parliament and prayers.

9.05 am I stay in the House to listen to a minister introduce a new bill that I am interested in.

9.30 am There is a stack of emails from people in the electorate, so I answer as many as possible.

10.30 am Yesterday, my research assistant and I wrote a speech, so I check the details and then make the twenty minute speech in the House.

11.00 am A journalist from the press gallery rings to ask me about something I said in the speech.

11.25 am Someone phones from my electorate and complains that they haven't received their tax refund cheque. I ring the Treasurer's office and check, then ask my secretary to call and tell the person the result.

Afternoon

12.15 pm Time for a short lunch in the staff canteen with a group of visitors from the electorate who are going to watch Question Time. They worked for me on election day so I appreciate their visit to Canberra.

2.00 pm All members have to go and sit in the House for Question Time.

3.15 pm It's gossip time with some parliamentary colleagues. We go to the coffee shop and discuss some of the events in Question Time.

4.00 pm There is a new stack of letters and emails to answer in my office.

4.37 pm The division bells ring so I run down the corridor to vote in the House. When I get there, I discover that my party is voting against an amendment. While they count the vote, I sit with a parliamentary colleague who tells me that she is going to have a baby.

5.00 pm Go to a meeting of the back bench committee on trade. I tell the others that a proposed free trade agreement might harm certain businesses in my electorate. The affected business people have been lobbying me and want me to get changes written into the Free Trade Bill.

Evening

6.30 pm I put on my jacket ready for dinner in the Members' Dining Room. I am having a meeting with a group of local government councillors from my electorate who want some additional federal funds for road repairs after last summer's floods. Nice dinner. One of the councillors whispers to me that there is a problem in the local hospital and suggests that I ring the manager and investigate.

7.45 pm I dictate a letter to the Immigration Minister on behalf of a person in my electorate who is having trouble getting a work visa for a family member in Singapore.

9.40 pm In a short speech in the Adjournment Debate I argue for more funding for child day care.

10.10 pm I ring for a car that drives me to the motel in Forrest, where I collapse into bed.